

Growing Cauliflowers Around Alice Springs

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VARIETIES

Cauliflowers grow well in Alice Springs and can take anywhere from 12-22 weeks to mature depending on the variety. For information on current varieties, time for planting and harvest, check with local nurseries.



PLANTING SEASON

Cauliflowers can be sown from February to September. Those maturing in hot weather sometimes have a discoloured curd; so sow later maturing varieties early.

SOIL PREPARATION

Dig the soil as deep as possible and mix in compost or animal manure.

FERTILISER

Mix fertiliser in with the soil before planting. Although there are many types of fertiliser in the market, a complete granular NPK (nitrogen: phosphorus: potassium) fertiliser is recommended. On areas that have been used for vegetable production for many years, you may also have to apply sulphate of potash.

During the growing season three side-dressings of urea should be applied as a ring around each plant or in a row alongside the plants.

Avoid putting fertiliser (apart from foliar fertiliser) on the leaves of the plant. **Always follow manufacturer's recommendations when applying fertilisers.**

PLANTING

Seed can be directly sown in clumps and thinned out. However, it is usually sown in seedling trays, seed-beds, peat pellets, or in small pots and then transplanted. Directly-sown seed can be placed 0.5 to 1 cm deep.

Seedlings can be transplanted when 8 to 10 cm high. Weak seedlings should be discarded. Plant spacing of the larger varieties is 50 cm between plants and 1 m between rows. The bed should be moist at sowing or transplanting time: apply about 50 mm (or 50 L/m²) of water just before planting.

WATERING

When seed is sown directly, frequent watering will be necessary until seedlings emerge; twice a day may be necessary in the hottest months. Watering before seedling emergence should be done with a watering-can or very gentle sprinkler so as not to disturb the soil covering the seed.



Mulching between the rows will reduce water loss.

After seedling emergence, watering should be at two-day intervals. This can be extended up to seven-day intervals for well-grown plants in cooler weather. The water requirement will range from about 15 mm (15 L/m²) every second day for new plantings in summer to about 50 mm (50 L/m²) every five days for well developed plants in hot weather. About 25 mm (25 L/m²) per seven days is needed for well-developed plants in winter months.

Cauliflower has a moderate tolerance to saline water. Water of 1000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids (T.D.S). and slightly over, can be used if leaf wetting is avoided during the day. Drip, basin, or furrow irrigation is preferred when water is over 1000 mg/L T.D.S.

MANAGEMENT

The area should be kept weed-free and insect pests should be controlled from the beginning. Mulching between plants is recommended. When the curd starts to develop, the outer leaves can be drawn together and tied over to protect it from the sun and maintain the desirable white colour.

INSECT CONTROL

Aphids are the biggest pest in Alice Springs. If aphids are present, they can be controlled using a dilute spray of insecticidal soap or horticultural oil.

In the home garden, caterpillars can be controlled by picking grubs off plants. The use of pesticides is restricted. Check with the Entomology section DPIFM for an appropriate chemical control, or refer to www.pestinfo.nt.gov.au"

Please visit us at our website:

www.nt.gov.au/dpifm

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